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consisting of SPLOST funds and the in-kind value of the property.

Union County's 4-H Shotgun Teams have already invested in the project. In 2014, the county purchased the 9.502 acres upon which the range will sit for \$150,000 in SPLOST money, and the 4-H Shotgun Teams raised \$15,000 to reimburse the county toward that initial property cost.

Since the majority of the money will come from federal funds, the range will be required to maintain "substantial" — a term not strictly defined — hours for general public use, though certain days and hours at the range will be reserved for the various 4-H programs, such as Shotgun, BB Gun and Archery.

"This facility will not only be utilized by 4-H, but will also be available to the public on certain days and at certain times," read Queen.

"It will also be available for use, when not being utilized for shotgun shooting, for archery and BB practice, and competitions.

"This facility will be designated for shotgun use only, but at some point in the future, if we can obtain additional property and funding through purchase or lease, it may be expanded for pistol and rifles."

Next steps include complying with environmental regulations and completing a site survey,

and the county hopes that process will take less than three months, at which time bids will be sought for construction of the project, with a tentative completion date of Fall 2016 or Spring 2017 at the latest.

Walter Lane, Hunter Development Program Manager for the Game Management Section of GA-DNR, gave a brief presentation and overview of the proposed shooting range, adding that a major goal of the project is for revenue

generated by the facility to pay for annual operating costs moving forward.

During the public comment portion of the meeting, some in the audience expressed concern over scheduling conflicts with the general public and the individual 4-H activities. For the most part, those in attendance reacted positively to the final draft and plans for the range.

The project has been ongoing for several years, and many of the major

players behind making the shooting range a reality spoke in the meeting that evening: Mitch Griggs, who is the director of the Union County Development Authority and has a daughter on a 4-H Shotgun Team; Tim Jennings, the Union County 4-H Coordinator for UGA Extension; Shotgun Team Coaches Gene Margelli and Keith Herbert; as well as several young 4-H members and other coaches.

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"We're hoping to have a new general manager by August," Perren said. "This person is probably not looking for a job right now. So it's someone who will have to give a notice. Hopefully, it's sooner than July or August, but we anticipate the new general manager — he, or she

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performance at Anderson Music Hall, an opportunity to see Turner during this visit to The Hall is looking dimmer and dimmer. There's only 700 or so tickets left.

Tickets for Section 1 are \$46 plus \$2 handling, and \$36 plus \$2 handling for Section 2, said Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds' General Manager Hilda Thomason.

"Kurt Thomas and the Small Town Band will open for

— will have their feet wet before the annual meeting in September."

EMC Board President Steven Phillips said with the selection of the Goodwin Group, the board was determined to get the best general manager possible.

"We want the best general manager that we can put in that seat," Phillips said. "We've got one shot to get this

Josh," Thomason said.

Thomas, from Dahlonega, and a close friend of Zac Brown (he bought his first guitar from Brown for \$80), has opened for Kenny Chesney, Brooks & Dunn, LeAnn Rimes, Gary Alan, Darius Rucker, and Zac Brown Band.

"He recently opened here for Ronnie Milsap," Thomason said. "He's really good — very possibly, the next big thing in Country Music."

Turner and Thomas are a don't miss opportunity.

right — one chance only, so we want the best."

The new general manager will replace Interim General Manager Dan Brewer, who was selected to replace Matthew Akins, who resigned as general manager following a controversy involving the former Board President Terry Taylor and a past due utility account.

According to a recent write-up, commercially, Turner's record is unimpeachable. "Long Black Train," his debut album went platinum, the follow up "Your Man" went double platinum, and his records continue to sell by the truckload to this day. But Josh Turner is more than just sales figures and one good performance; he's an unmissable talent at the very top of his game.

Thomas and the Small Town Band will open for Turner at 7 p.m.

Cody Lee Vestal dies in prison

By Charles Duncan
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The Georgia Department of Corrections awaits the conclusion of an investigation into the deaths of two Valdosta State Prison inmates.

Both are dead after their mattress caught fire in their prison cell on Feb. 9, according to DOC spokesperson Lisa Rodriguez-Presley.

Cody Lee Vestal, 36, who pled guilty to murdering his mother and her boyfriend in Union County on March 14, 2015, was one of those two inmates.

His cellmate, Richard Strickland, 31, also died in the fire, Rodriguez-Presley said.

State investigators say Vestal and Strickland died following the fire on Feb. 9. State investigators are still working to determine the cause of the fire.

"It appears they started a fire in their cell and were fatally injured," Rodriguez-Presley said. "The rest is under investigation."

Officials say both prisoners were rushed to South Georgia Medical Center.

Vestal died around 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 9. Strickland died at the hospital around 1:30 a.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 10, Rodriguez-Presley said.

Rodriguez-Presley said both bodies were taken to the GBI Crime Laboratory's Medical Examiners Office in Macon.

It could be two to three months before investigators get back the final autopsy reports and have an official cause of death for Vestal and Strickland, according to Rodriguez-Presley.

The events leading to the deaths of Vestal's mother Marilyn Laughlin, and her boyfriend Tony Poat began on March 14, Union County Superior Court records show.

A plea for help from Vestal at Rhea Medical Center in Dayton, Tenn., led to the discovery of the bodies of his mother and her boyfriend on Georgia 325 in Union

County.

Vestal confessed to Union County Sheriff's Detective Sgt. Tom Mangifesta that he murdered his mother, 60-year-old Marilyn Laughlin, and her 52-year-old live-in boyfriend Tony Poat, Union County Sheriff Mack Mason said.

Vestal and Poat had a confrontation on Saturday March 14, Detective Mangifesta said Vestal confirmed.

Dayton, Tenn. police confronted Vestal after he told medical workers at Rhea Medical Center that he wanted to kill himself, authorities in Tennessee and Georgia said.

Vestal returned to his vehicle after telling Rhea Medical Center staff that he wanted to kill himself.

Hospital officials called Dayton police who found Vestal in a Nissan Xterra outside the hospital. Inside his vehicle was a loaded AR-15 rifle, with a second, fully loaded clip.

Vestal was arrested on a charge of disorderly conduct. En route to jail, Vestal began to have convulsions. He apparently had taken two bottles of sleep aid pills in a failed attempt to take his own life.

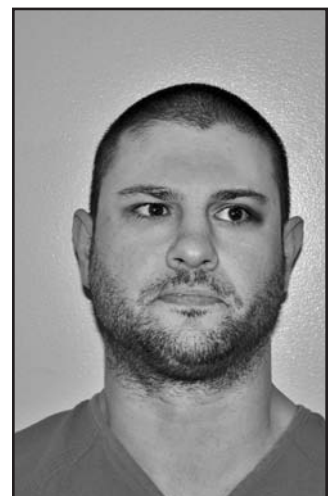
Vestal was returned to Rhea Medical Center, and then airlifted to Erlanger Hospital in Chattanooga, Tenn., authorities say.

The vehicle Vestal was driving was registered to Marilyn Laughlin, of Georgia 325, in Blairsville.

Unaware of a double homicide at that address, Dayton police contacted the Union County Sheriff's Office and asked them to tell Laughlin that her son was in intensive care in the Chattanooga hospital, Union County Sheriff's Detective Sgt. Andrew Hammond said.

Sgt. Hammond said that Union County sheriff's deputies arrived at the home that Laughlin shared with Poat on Sunday, March 15.

Sgt. Hammond said



Cody Lee Vestal

that deputies knocked on the door, but were unable to get anyone to answer. Deputies returned on Monday, and the scene was the same as it was on Sunday.

"Nothing had been touched, the same lights were on, and the cars were parked exactly the way they were on Sunday," Sgt. Hammond said. "We walked around the house, looking in the windows, and we saw what we believed to be a body inside the home."

"We kicked the door in, went inside the home and discovered two bodies," Sgt. Hammond said. "We went back outside so as not to disturb the crime scene, and we secured a search warrant to search the home."

Sheriff Mason contacted authorities in Chattanooga to alert them that Vestal was a person of interest in a double homicide in Union County.

Two Union County sheriff's deputies were dispatched to Erlanger Hospital to stand guard over Vestal as he recovered from his suicide attempt.

As Vestal recovered and was ready for release, he waived extradition back to Union County, Sheriff Mason said.

He later pled guilty to the double-homicide and was sentenced to life in prison. Union County Superior Court records show.